

# PRECARIOUS SPACES

The Arts, Social and Organizational Change

Edited by Katarzyna Kosmala and Miguel Imas

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## Preface

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*Precarious Spaces: The Arts, Social and Organizational Change* is a timely contribution that fills a gap in both the arts and social sciences literature concerning arts-informed interventions in peripheral spaces and creative practices of the poor and marginal.

The concept of precarious spaces and the use of arts-based inquiry as a research method in this context provides a valuable contribution to several academic fields, including social sciences, urban studies, geography, organisation studies, visual studies, as well as arts and philosophy. The remarkable aspect of this volume is a unique blend of different theoretical and conceptual approaches that brings together research on space, precarity, and art-centred interventional practices. Indeed, the first section of the volume provides an enriching and *avant-garde* set of ideas on how to conceptualise issues associated with social and organizational change in relation to marginal spaces. The breadth and critical appreciation of interdisciplinary engagement with the conceptualisation of creativity and precariat opens an important window for reflection upon the human condition in precarious realms, as well as how space can be constructed, negotiated and re-constructed at the periphery of society. Following from this refreshing conceptual framing, the chapters in Parts II and III bring cases and experiences from different locations of the Global South, including original insights into the world of favelas, and how we can learn and reflect back on our own communities while appreciating their richness ‘differently’. We get a glimpse of the complexities of settlement strategies – how communities have to improvise with scarcity of resources, embrace temporary conditions and deal with day-to-day challenges necessary to preserve and reproduce life locally. We also learn how community practices transform, as for instance in the case of the *Mbyá-Guarani*, to assert their dwelling culture in unimagined urban spaces.

Another significant contribution of this volume is an engagement with local histories through interdisciplinary dialogue, articulating theoretical reflections without privileging philosophical framings originating from the Global North. This is extremely relevant, as the inclination in producing knowledge of this nature tends to privilege the voice of the Global North and English-language framings, giving less importance to the knowledge produced in ‘other’ localities. This volume embeds theory as a reflection of the experiences of living communities.

This book, a testimony to the work and dedication of all the contributors bringing insight into the world of marginal dwellers, reflects the intellectual contribution of

Professor Marcelo Milano Falcão Vieira, who sadly died in December 2011. He significantly contributed to the formation of ideas in the early stages of this project, especially with his work on Brazilian culture and the impact of neo-liberal managerialism on local community practices. Among his outstanding work, relevant for this volume, was the importance he placed on studying favelas and peripheral neighbourhoods while probing the limits of culture in societal transformation. Henceforth, it is with this mix of sadness – as Marcelo Milano Falcão Vieira is not here to see this volume published – and joy – that I thank the authors and editors for bringing this valuable project to completion. Thus, I could not recommend this book more to anyone who wants to challenge their own understandings and perceptions of precarious spaces or simply explore how the intersection of precarity, community and intervention-centred art practices are negotiated in localities of the Global South.

Maria Ceci Misoczky

## **Part I**

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Introducing the Volume



## **Chapter 1**

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Why precarious spaces?

Katarzyna Kosmala and Miguel Imas



## Precarious?

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This volume addresses current concerns in art discourse around the instrumentality and agency of art in the context of the precarity of daily living, urban informality and the proliferation of alternative forms of organizing. Authors from South America as well as Europe, the United States and Canada engage with spatial strategies behind the utilization of precariousness, and examine ways of challenging forms of precarity, and indeed, the instigation of precarity.

The volume draws upon interdisciplinary research including cultural and visual studies, art theory, organization studies, architecture, urban planning, geography and contemporary philosophy, and supplements local histories and experiences in the Global South, as well as their theoretical frameworks, with theories of art and socio-political practice as they have been debated and developed in European and North American contexts. The book offers a survey of socially and community-engaged art practices in South America and from there expands to address similar issues in the Global North. The individual chapters examine examples of projects based on performances of space that can be seen as exceeding the norm, as well as case studies concerning art-informed inquiry aimed at social and transformative consequences, set against the backdrop of neo-liberal economies that have contributed to the emergence of precarity in both life and work. Such an inquiry implies not only a particular philosophical and theoretical position, but equally demonstrates how, in practice, groups, individuals, and communities can challenge constructed, established orders to create spaces of emancipation. Thus, the book offers a unique interdisciplinary perspective for engaging with some of the themes of precarious spaces by mobilizing the use of arts-based inquiry both as a research method and as an intervention that aims at social and organizational change; drawing on resources that originate from South America, including examples from Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Argentina and Chile, supplemented with insights and resources emerging from the North, including the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada.

The key phrases surrounding precarity, such as unstable condition of today's living; flexible, context-dependent and time-contingent employment; self-organization, disposability and contingency, have opened up new thresholds in theory development as well as in art-centred activism and the arts more generally. Foster (2009) identifies contemporary art practice with the precarious condition many artists share and respond to by creating meanings from uncertain circumstances, especially through a comment or an evocation of discourse,

in response to a political confusion, and in association with socio-economic unrest. Such processes associated with reimaging the precarious condition into spaces of opportunity also require a theoretical reflection upon the processes of intervention and self-organization. At the same time, the scope of the critique of contemporary Capitalism and neo-liberal sentiments threatens to generalize precarity as a somewhat undifferentiated and ubiquitous condition.

We could argue, following on from Judith Butler's investigation into human vulnerability in *Precarious Lives: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (2004), that, while what can be termed as precariousness is common to all life and contemporary living, a state of precarity associated with the contemporary moment of neo-liberalism is largely politically induced and, we would add, requires to be problematized. Precarity commonly refers to a living condition based on temporality, fragmentation and job insecurity in increasingly flexible labour markets. Precarious spaces are often seen as not being stable, settled or well staked out; these spaces are perceived as unstable, unsettled and relatively unmapped or less visible. Precarious places reflect exposure to spaces that are marginal in our societies (Wacquant, 2008) and yet, often, informality of marginalized groups becomes a groundwork for 'inverse colonialism' (Yiftachel, 2009).

Butler (2004) returns to Emmanuel Levinas and his analysis of the meaning of being human, and, from such a basis, argues for a kind of political and ethical work needed to achieve peace globally, and indeed, for creating a condition for better, 'liveable' lives. Zygmunt Bauman refers to contemporary times as an era of uncertainty, a state of 'liquid modernity' and 'liquid times,' where instability and unpredictability are reshaping the society as a network rather than conforming to a solid structure. Bauman (2007) also notes that the responsibility to shape a liveable life has fallen on the individual, as a life, demarcated by a series of short-term projects, requires most of all flexibility and adaptability to the rigours of the social factory and demands for increased productivity. In this frame, he argues for solutions emerging from the 'local' organization or a community rather than institutional structures or a state authority.

There is also the precariat. What has been commonly referred to as the precariat – a term describing a recent, tangible phenomenon – is a social class in the making, and approaches the consciousness of common vulnerability that Butler, Bauman and others have been hinting at (Harvey, 2010: 243). The precariat consists of those who feel their living and identities are made up of fragmented and fractured elements, in which it seems impossible to construct a desirable narrative by weaving work and quality time for a life outside work (Harvey, 2010, 2014; Standing, 2011). Under neo-liberal Capitalism, the balance of power has switched from labour to capital, resulting in occupational insecurity, precariousness and individualization of life (McGuigan, 2010).

We would argue that a notion of precariat can be viewed as an umbrella term, encompassing experiences of all those who need to train themselves – regardless of their origin – in order to compete on labour markets and to find a source of income, often on a temporary basis, and without social security in the case of illness or when needing assistance

(e.g. Neilson and Rossiter, 2006; Kalleberg, 2009). Thus, precariat refers to experiences of people that have been made redundant, those on zero-hours contracts, migrants, asylum seekers as well as the so-called creative class, and, in particular, those who are most likely to be in debt at the time of entering the labour market.<sup>1</sup> Referring to the latter, Gregory Sholette in his book *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* has pointed out, drawing on an astrophysics-derived metaphor of ‘dark matter’, that ‘without this obscure mass of “failed” artists the small cadre of successful artists would find it difficult, if not impossible, to sustain the global art world as it appears today’ (2011: 3). Sholette describes a complex division of labour in the art world whereby many excluded creative practices as well as marginalized and ‘unsuccessful’ artists sustain the functioning of the system through volunteering practice; serving as interns at art galleries, taking underpaid art teaching positions or other jobs and consuming art experience more generally. The author argues that it is the system that keeps the creative class in a state of subservience, and, in a sense, a state of co-dependence.

Bauman, Butler, Wacquant, and to some degree Harvey as well as others, all imply an individual pressure in the struggle to make a living in relation to precarity. And such a positioning of individual agency, indeed, implies vulnerability. Analysing Butler’s ethical position, Lloyd points out that for Butler, the body is central to a conceptualization of vulnerability since it is precisely the body that exposes us and opens us to the other, their gaze, touch and various forms of violence (2008: 94).

The main focus of the collection is a critical reflection upon the concepts of space, precariousness and broadly defined, art-based activities as well as their dynamic relationship, in seeking a change and transformation of living conditions, associated with what Butler (2004) described as ‘liveable’ lives. Similarly, Anna Dezeuze debating precariousness in art practices in the context of socio-economic development refers to Hannah Arendt’s conceptualisation of human condition as ‘human existence as it has been given’ (Ardent, 1958: 2 in Dezeuze, forthcoming) and argues that ‘it is a matter of addressing the situation of the individual, here and now, in the concrete world, on a human scale’ (Dezeuze, forthcoming: 27).

The chapters in this volume examine various urban spaces and locations associated with the imaginary of precariousness, seek practices within such contexts that are neither formally managed nor organized, as well as explore examples of interventions in the geographical imaginary of the precarious that emerge out of architecture, design, visual arts, music and performative practice. The chapters articulate different discourses of social change, instigated by arts-based intervention that can imply a cross-cultural engagement, neighbourhood-driven action, politically infused activism in a particular area and community building. The volume also explores uses of media discourse as platform for a social change and a forum for asking questions on established perceptions of existence in the imaginary of precarious realms, including examples of urban voids, derelict buildings, self-built communities, such as a favelas or shantytowns, as well as dwellings based on occupation of urban infrastructure, such as an underpass or roadside.

*Precarious Spaces* is devoted to explorations of the South, pointing out that some locations and geographical imaginings appear more vulnerable to enactments and investigations of precarity than others. The Latin American Modernist movement, with its often unacknowledged debt to the vernacular architecture of the 1920s and 1930s, has drawn inspiration from local communities' experiences of communal living and reflected upon the ways of coping with exclusion in different socio-economic environments. By looking at the South American experience, and Brazil's 'informal' situation in particular, for transferable methodological processes and from such a position, expanding to the North, the volume contributes to a debate on the possibilities of change through social, environmental and ecological solutions offered to the spatial problems and socio-economic challenges associated with 'liveable' life.

### **Artistic engagement with the imaginary of the precariousness**

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Precarity signifies many things and is commonly associated with socio-economic challenges of contemporary living, uses of public space, political issues of the creative classes, agency in arts, interventions and social movements. More broadly, it reflects contemporary interests in political philosophy and cultural theory, including the writings of Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Achille Mbembe, Paolo Virno, Zygmunt Bauman, Judith Butler, Claire Bishop and others.

This edited collection is concerned with a set of broadly defined arts-based relational practices and their potentiality to creatively facilitate knowledge exchange and to instigate social change. A closer examination of the agency, emerging out of relational or participatory art practices in precarious contexts, or addressing imaginary of precariousness, puts the role of self-organizing systems and its micro-politics at the centre of discussion.

In aesthetic terms, associated with broadly defined participatory or relational practice, that is, in dialogical aesthetics, the art object appears less important than the participatory process, or transgresses the purely artistic enactment of and engagement in a particular context; as argued by Claire Bishop, Grant Kester and others. The book seeks alternative answers as to how the artistic engagement within the participatory and relational paradigm can provide a tangible platform for an exploration of political alternatives for social change. The book also examines organizational practices that emerge from the grassroots, including circumstances of impoverished and dis-possessed communities and their bottom-up organizational forms. The question is: What kind of aesthetic lens is required for such an engagement?

Theoretical framings of dialogical aesthetics appear complex, oscillating between structuralist and post-structuralist positions and critical hermeneutics. Referring to Jürgen Habermas' concept of discursive interaction and the importance of openness, Jean-Francois Lyotard and his aesthetics of the *differand* and Ken Hirschkop's take on Mikhail Bakhtin's redemptive inter-subjectivity, Kester in *Conversation Pieces* provided a useful definition by describing dialogical aesthetics as being 'based on the generation of a local consensual

knowledge that is only provisionally binding and that is grounded at the level of collective interaction' (2004: 112). Within a set of art practices that broadly aspire to dialogic aesthetics, a reflective positioning can act as a catalyst for change, potentially revealing more of the experiential specificity of the world as the context-focus unfolds. In a dialogic aesthetic frame, artistic practice embraces the importance of a dialogue, as an integral component to an engaged practice (Kosmala, 2010).

Nicolas Bourriaud, putting aside criticism associated with his writing, pointed out that the way of working for some contemporary artists today is governed by a concern to 'give everyone their chance,' through forms that do not establish any precedence, a priori, of the producer or the artist over the beholder, but rather negotiate open relationships (Bourriaud, 2002: 58). Representational conventions of the arts and aesthetics, therefore, may be challenged by the creative facilitation of knowledge exchange. It is also a site-specificity that can become a space for encounter. The space and its specificity can facilitate the possibility of change, with a shift away from art as object-making to art conceptualized as an open form of exchange or co-production, whether in reference to the gallery context, as Bourriaud discussed in *Relational Aesthetics* (1998/2002), or outside the gallery realms, as Kester delineated in *Conversation Pieces* (2004), and further developed in *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (2011) in relation to politically engaged practice, blurring the line between community activism and art production. Yet, participative, interventional action does not necessarily embrace a 'positive' paradigm, as some artists and activists may be drawn to the 'good vibe' and 'social activism' promoted by Bourriaud (2002) or 'community art' (Kester, 2011: 2004), while others may incorporate 'aestheticisation' of poverty (Dezeuze, 2006) or an act of antagonism (Bishop, 2004) in artistic renegotiation and political reframing. There is also a wider problem associated with the way of art functioning in the processes of neo-liberal appropriation and the proximity of art and politics (Kosmala, 2015). Sholette (2011) has warned that political agency in art and collective action, although initially aimed at challenging the hegemony of the art world, risks being eventually co-opted or absorbed by the dominant system, appropriated by its institutions, or simply forgotten and marginalized.

## Structure of the volume

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This edited collection focuses on precarious spaces associated with or located in public realms, predominantly drawing on the South American experience, where alternative forms of urban informality may be emerging as a 'new paradigm for understanding urban culture' (Roy and AlSayyad, 2004). Some chapters also address the concepts of 'site-specificity' (Kwon, 2002) and location, pointing out the privilege of the artist's agency and origin in relation to cultural and social regeneration of precarious spaces and working with peripherally located communities around the globe. Artists can be seen as agents that can simulate change but also may act as those who contaminate space by their enacted roles in specific time-defined

moments, challenging the boundaries of art production between politics and aesthetics. The authors in their chapters discuss various encounters and alternative strategies that can express experiential effects of intervention for being and becoming a more ‘liveable’ place. By doing so, the book’s individual contributions help to invent archives and utilize modes of engagement for unleashing the hidden potential, aimed to transform the current condition (less ‘liveable’ place) and to discover innovative means for change.

The book consists of three Parts: **I: Introducing the Volume** explores the key terms advanced throughout, including a notion of precariousness, autonomy, community at periphery in global realms and social and organizational change, as well as introduces the context of the book; **II: Emancipating: The Arts and the Possibility of Change** discusses examples of artistic engagement in and with the precarious, and examining interventions addressing the questions of socio-economic change; **III: Resisting: Opening Organizations, Altering Organizing** explores the potentiality of cultural and other forms of organizations in engaging with the precarious, as well as discusses how forms of (self-)organizing can alter the political dynamics of neighbourhood and community building.

This opening chapter contextualizes the volume by introducing key terms associated with the notion of precarity and precariousness, as well as briefly discussing types of arts-based interventions that feature in the volume; reflecting upon a trend that revisits modernist artistic and social utopias, particularly in seeking positive cultural openings in specific sites and communities perceived as being vulnerable to precarious living. The Introduction supplements Chapter 2, which theorizes and discusses two particularly rich categories – planetarity and autonomy – that together can help reframe contemporary precarity debates by providing directions for renewed creativity in interactively responding to, and directing, social change. Brydon argues that although change is challenging, contemporary living provides opportunities for the kind of decolonizing project, linking global cognitive and social justice, as envisioned by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Walter Mignolo, Gayatri Spivak and others.

Part II of the volume, **Emancipating: The Arts and the Possibility of Change** opens with Chapter 3, a case study of the *Complexo da Maré*, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, an area formed by abandoned industrial infrastructures and expanding slums. Vaz and Seldin discuss the processes of historical formation and transformation of architectural spaces within the *Maré* hybrid realms, and examine the relationship between the emerging culture in *Maré* and the existing, expanding city. The analysis draws on interdisciplinary inquiry, including writings of Brazilian geographers Milton Santos and Rogério Haesbaert, French cultural geographer Joël Bonnemaison, Brazilian cultural theorist Teixeira Coelho, Argentinian anthropologist Néstor García Canclini, among others. Kosmala in Chapter 4, drawing on the examples of site-specific works realized under the umbrella of ‘Favela Painting’, the arts-based interventions that are site-specific and targeted at the socio-disadvantaged areas, debates the potentiality of their critical dimension, bringing the voices of art theorists and critics in relational practice, including Grant Kester and Nicolas Bourriaud, as well as Brazilian geographer Milton Santos. Parry in Chapter 5 examines spontaneous vernacular architecture, its origins in indigenous building forms

and construction methods, through the art practice of the artist Abraham Cruzvillegas who grew up in a squatter settlement on the then vacant periphery of Mexico City, in the so-called ‘unofficial zone’ of Ajusco. Cruzvillegas’ artistic project *Autoconstrucción* relates the story of his childhood through the self-build construction of a family home on the volcanic lands. The chapter includes the associated discourse of artists such as Francis Alÿs, Santiago Sierra, Marijetica Potrc, as well as writings by art theorists and critics such as Claire Bishop, Grant Kester, Anna Dezeuze, among others. Olmos and Biffi in Chapter 6 present FOLI Lab, a museographic urban experiment from the First Biennial of Photography in Lima, Peru, aimed to provide an alternative space for reflection and appreciation of photographic culture locally. FOLI Lab made humble efforts towards public engagement across the wider social spectrum of Lima’s population, fostering not only social integration, but increasing shared collaboration and local communities’ participation during the Biennial. Imas and Weston in Chapter 7, building on Mouffe’s agonistic pluralism and Boje’s notion of ante/organized, introduce ‘organsparkZ’ defined as: ‘forms of co-participative art-activist practices of spontaneous and an unrestrained nature, which are enacted in primarily (but not exclusively) precarious spaces.’ In such a frame, the authors discuss the examples of creative responses to the crisis situation, emerging from local organizations: (1) Buenos Aires, Argentina, in occupied printing factory, Chilavert; (2) Cape Town, South Africa in non-profit organization Salesian Life Choices; and (3) Valparaíso, Chile, in the Valopo Hills’ communities.

**Part III: Resisting: Opening Organizations, Altering Organizing** commences with Chapter 8 in which Carvalho and Marquesan discuss the historical formation of *Mbyá-Guarani* indigenous camps in Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil, and their land occupation strategies. The authors analyse local histories of the camps, drawing on writings of Santana, Oliveria, Lima and others. The chapter explains the idea behind the *Mbyá-Guarani*’s resistance strategy, based on exposing their own misery as an instrument of struggle for constitutional rights. In Chapter 9, Lima, Pires and Martins discuss examples of *Fábricas Recuperadas* and co-operatives from across Brazil’s industrial sectors, varying from metallurgy to canvas textile production, focusing on the dilemmas of their origins and development. The authors make comparisons with the Argentinean case of *Fábricas Recuperadas*,<sup>2</sup> and argue that Brazilian recovery experiences did not manifest as a popular movement and never had back-up support from the trade unions. In Chapter 10, Darbilly presents examples of social practices associated with media activism in Brazil, such as Movement of Progressive Bloggers BlogProg and Mídia Ninja, and explores possibilities of resistance to the organizing practices of traditional dominant media corporations. In Chapter 11, Peci, Lacerda and Brulon probe how cultural organizing practices can produce space, transforming it in terms of its symbolic, political and technical dimensions, drawing on writings of Marcello Vieira, Milton Santos and Henri Lefebvre, among others. The authors examine how organizing practices encompassing a variety of cultural initiatives in an exemplary Brazilian favela, which they termed as favela *Fluminense*, can mediate the effects of precarity through the transformation of space within the confines of a so-called

'slum' territory. The volume closes with Chapter 12, written in a form of a performative letter exchange. Molina and Rockwell address each other with questions, hinting at the nature of human interdependency and the need to theorize what a political practice that takes human interdependency and vulnerability to others might consist of in searching for more 'liveable' lives.

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## Notes

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- 1 Linking to conflation of precarity debates, ways of living and creative labour, Banks and Hesmondhaugh have usefully summarized problems commonly related to experiences of creative class, as they argued that creative labour is:

project-based and irregular, contracts tend to be short-term and there is little job protection; that is there is a predominance of self-employed or freelance workers; that career prospects are uncertain and often foreshortened; that earnings are usually slim and unequally distributed and that insurance, health protection and pension benefits are limited; that creatives are younger than other workers and tend to hold second or multiple jobs; and that women, ethnic and other minorities are under-represented and disadvantaged in creative employment.

(2009: 420)
- 2 *Fábricas Recuperadas* is an umbrella term that refers to abandoned bankrupt businesses that were recovered at the time of the crisis initially in Argentina by workers themselves, promoting alternative organizing practices such as an elimination of operational management and flattening of the hierarchy in the organizational structure (Kosmala and Imas, 2012).



## **Chapter 2**

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How emergent cultural imaginaries of autonomy and planetarity can  
reframe contemporary precarity debates

Diana Brydon



## **Introduction**

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This chapter argues, first, that how communities imagine the spaces open to their agency is crucial in shaping the futures their members can devise; and secondly, that the concepts of autonomy and planetarity, when thought of together, can provide helpful directions for a renewed creativity in interactively responding to and directing social change. Although change can be frightening, our changing times provide new opportunities for the kind of decolonizing projects linking global cognitive and global social justice, as envisioned by Boaventura de Sousa Santos and his colleagues (2007a, 2007b). Santos attends to the epistemic violence that accompanied modernity and finds alternative modes of knowing in previously subjugated cultures of the world. His project of validating what he calls an ‘ecology of knowledges’ (2007a: ix–xvii), will eventually require rethinking many of the categories through which both scholarly knowledge systems and everyday common sense make meanings. This chapter attends to two particularly rich and problematic categories – planetarity and autonomy – which together can help reframe contemporary precarity debates addressed in this volume. To substantiate this argument, this chapter offers a literature review of some of the key ways in which planetarity is being used to elaborate on an emergent imaginary and redefine autonomy. These two cultural concepts carry important political implications for the organization of social relations at all scales of communal involvement.

## **Globalization, precarity and neo-liberal imaginaries**

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Contemporary cosmopolitan, feminist, decolonial, postcolonial and globalization studies have converged in recent years around discussions of precarious spaces. The production of ‘precarity’, a complex and contested term as pointed out in Chapter 1, a neologism coined to describe new forms of labour organization (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005), is linked to trends in globalizing processes, especially to pressures that are often summarized as inspired by neo-liberal ideologies. Arguing that ‘neo-liberalism has become the stamp of our age,’ Marnie Holborow explains that it is ‘at root an economic theory’ that argues for the untrammelled efficiency of the market in shaping economic, political and social relations (2012: 14–15). This theory also functions as ‘a dominant ideology emanating from a dominant class’ (2012: 29) and as such works in contradictory ways. This perception of neo-liberalism emerged

strongly in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008. Whereas previously many thinkers had been celebrating the autonomy afforded to individuals by freeing market flows from state regulation before the crisis, after 2008 the balance of attention began to shift towards redefining such flexible freedoms in terms of precarity. The emergent discourses of precarity now seem to have replaced earlier concerns about globalization that centred on the autonomy of the nation-state. A consensus now seems to have emerged that these earlier fears that globalization was weakening nation-state autonomy had diverted attention from growing inequalities within nation-states, as well as within areas beyond their control. An increased awareness of precarity now accompanies concerns about governance and legitimacy, while also motivating new social movements and re-energizing critique.

Pavan Kumar Malreddy defines precarity as 'an experiential and affective subject position that is produced by a lack of access to institutional structures that ensure safety, stability, income opportunities and protection' (2015: 14). Although he defines the term in relation to 'the normative categories of subalterns or proletarians (e.g. detainees of internment camps, sweatshop labourers and domestic workers)', the deprofessionalizing middle class is increasingly identifying with this subject position, as exemplified by the Occupy Movement. One might argue that precarity has been part of globalization discourse at least since Anthony Giddens (1999) wrote about 'our runaway world' and Ulrich Beck (1992) theorized the rise of 'the risk society.' Its more current manifestations, while continuing to stress a growing awareness of humanity's environmental dependencies, and the fragility of many multi-nation-states, centre more strongly than ever on growing economic disparities and the changing nature of employment. Insofar as awareness of human vulnerability can turn understanding of agency towards communal action, it can prove a potentially useful counter to neo-liberal indifference to human suffering. But it can also lead towards a sense of hopelessness that can be expressed through apathy, protest without offering alternatives, or even an increased selfish drive to succeed at any cost. This is why attention to autonomy, understood as self-determination, still matters, and why this chapter links that attention to emergent understandings of planetarity, providing a context for a renewed understanding of autonomy as fundamentally relational. 'Relational autonomy,' as theorized by feminist thinkers in particular, provides an important corrective to neo-liberal theorizations of autonomy as aggressively individualist (Code, 2000).

## **Globalization and autonomy**

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The theorization in this chapter builds on my experience in the 'Globalization and Autonomy' collaborative research group, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. In 2000, I joined this interdisciplinary research team, which framed its understanding of the challenges posed by globalization in terms of investigating '*the relationship between globalization and the processes of securing and building autonomy*' (Pauly and Coleman, 2008: viii; original emphasis). Implicit in our choice of theme was the

emerging common sense of the time that globalization was creating a ‘risk society’ in which precarious spaces were multiplying, and precarity was becoming the social norm – with each of these developments potentially impairing the capacity of nation-states and individuals within them to exercise their autonomy. Over subsequent years, my understanding of social change within shifting contexts of community formation has been shaped by this work and the demands it has made to question the ways in which people make meanings within different cultural contexts under changing historical and economic pressures. My theoretical approach derives from my background in feminist postcolonial studies and the teamwork that led to my co-edited volume in our Globalization and Autonomy series: *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts* (Brydon and Coleman, 2008). In asking what happens to the autonomy of individuals and communities due to globalization, we addressed both the coercive and comforting dimensions of community while seeking to redraw the conceptual maps through which community, globalization and autonomy are understood. Those maps were largely created through the partnerships formed between Capitalism, colonialism and imperialism, through which a localized view of the world, grounded in imperialist knowledge formations, claimed universality for its values.

### **Decolonizing the mind**

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Postcolonial theory and cultural production set out to decolonize this dominant imaginary, but the decolonizing project has yet to be realized in either the academy or in the world beyond academia. While philosophically, there is a sense that justice will always be ‘to come,’ that recognition, while inspiring humility, should not deter efforts to move towards ending injustice now. In this chapter, my first concern is with epistemic injustice, whose ties to other forms of injustice are too often neglected. Decolonization of the imagination is an ongoing project, and takes different forms in different times and places. Internal disputes within the postcolonial field often miss the potential of postcolonial thinking to recast a shared project within a different mould. Ongoing disputes pitting theory against practice, university work against political work and resistance against complicity, are signs of a discourse that misrepresents the challenge of the postcolonial field to re-conceptualize human relations to each other, and to the world, beyond these disabling divisions. These opposed arenas, once understood as separate, are now being understood as connected within a larger epistemic frame associated with the ebbing dominance of European modernity.

The work of Walter Mignolo, in bringing Latin American decolonial analysis of ‘the darker side’ of modernity to a global audience, has been central in drawing attention to the ‘cracks’ in Eurocentric knowledge construction, and thus has actively advanced the project of ‘provincializing Europe,’ as advocated by Chakrabarty (2000). Even more importantly, however, this work retrieves alternative modes for making meaning and organizing human relations among themselves and the world. The success of the decolonial approach may be seen in the emerging consensus in certain circles that European thought is being displaced

from its centrality, in Europe and the Americas, by other de-Westernizing configurations, as depicted in the 2015 study: *The Anomie of the Earth: Philosophy, Politics, and Autonomy* (Luisetti et al., 2015). This displacement is largely being facilitated by the increased visibility of the world's indigenous peoples on the global stage and by their success in getting the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ratified. But the potentially transformative impact of such decolonizing thinking has yet to be felt within either the academy or the wider societies of the West more generally. Malreddy (2011: 669) concludes that 'a neo-assimilatory process is already underway as most mainstream disciplines (sociology, psychology) list postcolonialism as just *another* methodology in their respective disciplinary traditions' (original emphasis), instead of considering the more fundamental challenges it poses. Most assessments concur – postcolonial critique has had an additive impact, enlarging the scope of disciplinary investigations, but without achieving a fully transformative impact. Gayatri Spivak argues the same process has blocked feminist analysis.

In both fields, the research imagination has yet to be 'de-parochialized' (Appadurai, 2000, 2006). Yet, at the same time, under other names, similar projects are underway. The editors of *Decolonizing European Sociology* conclude their introduction with the claim that 'our aim is to open up a space for a multiplicity of critical projects that may not use the same term for labelling themselves, but which pursue common goals' (Boatca, Costa and Rodriguez 2010: 2). This openness to multiple inflections of naming represents a promising redirection, especially for scholars and activists engaging in border-crossing team-based research. For example, Gluck and Tsing's collection, *Words in Motion: Toward a Global Lexicon* (2009), and Cassin, Apter, Lezra and Wood's *Dictionary of Untranslatable: A Philosophical Lexicon (Translation/Transnation)* mark a growing willingness to understand the network of travelling influences that shape concepts growing out of multiple contexts so that certain keywords of the Western civilizational imagination are now seen to be unable to indicate understandings of the world generated out of other, previously marginalized and now resurgent imaginative experiences. Other keywords, such as autonomy, need to be reclaimed from their neo-liberal appropriations.

The work of Nishnaabeg author Leanne Simpson, in *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence, and a new Emergence* (2011) and *Islands of Decolonial Love* (2013), returns to her language as the source of modes of thinking for reclaiming community and alternative understandings of culture and governance. As she explains: 'Our languages house our teachings and bring the practice of those teachings to life in our daily existence. The process of speaking Nishnaabewowin, then, inherently communicates certain values and philosophies that are important to Nishnaabeg being' (2011: 49). She further explains: 'Our social movements, organizing, and mobilizations are stuck in the cognitive box of imperialism and we need to step out of the box, remove our colonial blinders and at least see the potential for radically transformed ways of existence' (2011: 148). That potential will be found in the language. 'Bringing the old into the new is our way forward' (2011: 148–149), she concludes. Her texts put English into dialogue with her language of origin, to pull readers into an embodied understanding of her truth. She explains, 'our word for

truth, (o)debwewin, literally means “the sound of the heart” (2011: 94). That grounding in what she terms ‘a Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg-constructed world’ (2011: 95) exemplifies an understanding of the world literally danced into a renewed existence, which corresponds to what I see gestured towards in Gayatri Spivak’s theorization of planetarity.

## Planetarity and autonomy

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In this context, Spivak’s notion of ‘planetarity’ (2003) offers a complementary emergent cultural imaginary for revived research and social engagement. ‘Planetarity,’ as Spivak conceives it, offers an alternative to globalization and a way of defining the self that does not depend on opposition to an Other, or separation from a sense of communal responsibility. The problem with planetarity is its abstract quality, something it shares with globalization. In that sense it contrasts with Simpson’s stress on land. Yet Simpson’s land, ‘our turtle’s back,’ in her people’s cosmology, is part of what planetarity is attempting to signal; that is, a world outside Capitalist systems of relation, a world not constituted by a nature/culture binary.

‘Transnational literacy’ (Spivak, 2003: 81), a companion concept, refers to the modes of meaning-making that will arise as people educate themselves in the differences of planet-thought, and the linguistic diversity that ‘was closed by colonialism’ (Spivak, 2010: 34). What might such a project look like? Simpson’s books, setting up a dialogue between Nishnaabeg and English concepts, grounded in the humanly experienced every day and rotating outwards, provide one example. Her thinking is in dialogue with Cree writer Neal McLeod, who explains: ‘é-ânisko-âcimoki, literally translated, means: “they connect through telling stories.” The central strand in which Cree poetic discourse flourished and continues is through the connection of contemporary storytellers and poets to the ancient poetic pathways of our ancestors’ (2014: 91). Such a process is open-ended and critical. It challenges Western notions of theory and tradition, grounding theory in ‘concrete situations,’ as well as noting that Cree traditions are built upon open-endedness and radical questioning (2014: 97). For such indigenous thinkers, local and global are not in contradiction but in complex and fluid relation.

From within what Simpson terms ‘the cognitive box of imperialism,’ planetarity and the transnational invoke large-scale border-crossing possibilities not usually associated with autonomy, which, at first glance, does not seem to belong in this grouping. I will make the case, however, that autonomy is precisely what is at stake in successfully negotiating change, within local and global contexts. Self-governance is not a concept the West can claim as solely its own, nor can it claim the sole right to define it.

Autonomy is generally viewed as a liberal concept, tied to Western traditions, and is often criticized as far too readily adaptable to neo-liberal demands. It is either ignored or attacked by mainstream postcolonial theory, yet, I would suggest, it requires renewed attention. Timothy J. Reiss (2002) addresses key problems with how the liberal concept of autonomy has been deployed in the cultural field. I take his arguments seriously, yet still believe

that autonomy designates a value that is worth retaining, in a modified form. Redefining autonomy is what is at stake in Spivak's groundbreaking essay, 'Can the subaltern speak?' (1988; revisited in 1999).

In *Nationalism and the Imagination*, Spivak defines the subaltern as 'people who accept wretchedness as normality' (2010: 16). In *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, she names her preferred definition, as referring to 'those removed from all lines of social mobility' (2012: 430). These are the conditions of precarity. If autonomy refers to that system of relations that gives some people access to audibility, visibility and agency, while blocking others from access to such lines of social mobility, then it needs to be asked: How do the liberal definitions of autonomy, as a right and a value, need to be revised? This question formed part of the early postcolonial feminist insistence that Western women could not assume their definitional priority over the views of women in what was then called the Third World (Mohanty, 1984). If Western definitions of the human, agency and responsibility need to be rethought to address the situatedness of women in different parts of the world, as well as to more carefully understand what makes the subaltern, then interrogating autonomy must be part of that process of rethinking. Contemporary feminist philosophy continues to wrestle with these questions, asking, in response to some Muslim women's acceptance of Sharia law, for example, whether a decision to limit one's autonomy in certain ways can ever be made autonomously.

Although autonomy in many Western contexts is broadly understood to mark an individual's separation from community, I have come to see autonomy as always, in the end, relational autonomy. When understood as the capacity to give laws to oneself, autonomy functions as a social rather than an individual enterprise. At the same time, full recognition of a woman's right to autonomy also requires revision of what constitutes sociality; what Nancy calls 'being-in-common' (1991: xxxvii) and 'being together' (xxxix) or, throughout his book of that title, 'being singular plural' (2000). In other words, autonomy needs to be freed from its role in legitimizing the possessive individualism, analysed by Macpherson (1962). The liberal notion of autonomy that produced a self-consolidating otherness for agents of imperialism, as described by Spivak, should not be allowed to strangle the more democratic potential of the concept. Rethinking autonomy involves respect for the other as fully representative of the human rather than as confined to particularity in opposition to the Western-determined universal. That respect for the other is now being taken even further, beyond assuming the centrality of humanity, into recognizing the agency of animals and objects. That expanded definition of relationality is linked by some to a type of planetary thinking in terms of geological eras, linked to the concept of the Anthropocene, but those extensions are not my focus here.

Yash Ghai claims that 'autonomy is increasingly becoming the metaphor of our times' (2000: 2). Yet, mainstream postcolonial and cultural theories have engaged this metaphor much less often, at least directly, than have democratic, feminist, philosophical and political theories. Closer attention to current debates over autonomy will be necessary for postcolonial cultural theory to move beyond its current position. Too often, postcolonial theorists simply dismiss the idea of autonomy as a Eurocentric imposition, without interrogating its complex and sometimes contradictory usages and its undeniable importance within current

discourses of democracy, human rights, medical care and social justice. Neo-liberalism, based on an ideology of the possessive individual cast in opposition to the state and society, has led to a version of autonomy that feminist philosopher Lorraine Code labels 'a perversion of autonomy' (2000). That is not the kind of autonomy I am advocating here.

I am influenced by the work of feminists such as Code (2000) on 'relational autonomy' and by Cornelius Castoriadis' work (1991, 1998) in changing how the social imaginary is understood. For him, autonomy is the meaning-making creative power that constitutes society and enables people to imagine what is real. As Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar explains, 'Castoriadis' account of the social imaginary as the matrix of innovation and change is linked to his central political project of promoting autonomy. According to Castoriadis, one cannot strive for autonomy without striving simultaneously for the autonomy of others' (2002: 8). This was the conclusion our Globalization and Autonomy research team arrived at in composing the volume, *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts* (Brydon and Coleman, 2008). To engage in that project of collectively striving for autonomy, from a postcolonial perspective, requires moving away from what Gaonkar calls Castoriadis' 'staggering Eurocentrism' (2002: 9) and his masculinist bias. Postcolonial and indigenous theories encourage us to question the distinction Castoriadis makes between heteronomous traditional societies and autonomous modern societies, a distinction accepted by Charles Taylor in his *Modern Social Imaginaries*. I see Spivak's embrace of planetarity as an attempt to get beyond theories that distinguish between static traditional societies, where norms are assumed to be incapable of change, on the one hand, and self-identified modern societies, where self-questioning enables change, on the other.

Indigenous, decolonial and postcolonial work often refuses the tradition/modernity distinction and the assumptions on which it is based, which include assumptions about autonomy. From the modern point of view, individuals from so-called traditional cultures are seen as victims of their culture, unable to revise their inherited social norms, whereas modern individuals are autonomous, capable of critique and effecting change. Spivak describes one dimension of this thinking, when she dismisses the colonial trope of 'white men saving brown women from brown men,' and she moves away from this 'tradition versus modernity' optic in suggesting that her idea of planetarity is perhaps 'best imagined from the precapitalist cultures of the planet' (Spivak, 2003: 101). She sees in these precapitalist imaginaries an alternative to the need for self-consolidating others that characterizes European modernity. The challenge posed by these alternative imaginaries constitutes part of her project of training 'the imagination to be tough enough to test its limits' (Spivak, 2010: 47), 'unlearning our privilege as our loss' (Spivak, 1990: 9), and 'learning to learn from below' (Spivak, 2008: 43). Writing out of the eclipsed imaginaries of her people, Simpson seeks to escape the 'cognitive box of imperialism' through her own process of understanding loss and learning from the ancestors to revalue dreams and visions as routes into forms of imagining that align her community 'with the emergent and creative forces of the implicate order' (2011: 146). Revaluing orality is part of Simpson's method for simultaneously learning and teaching, an expanded form of transnational literacy.

## Transnational literacy

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Spivak introduces transnational literacy as a singular concept, designed to revise what literacy means beyond conventional notions of reading and writing, by insisting that it includes an awareness of the power relations built into knowledge production in local and cross-cultural contexts. As such, this kind of critical literacy is a task for everyone. How it is to be achieved will depend on the local circumstances in which learners function and what it involves will vary with those circumstances. At a general level, it requires in learners an aptitude for self-critique, vigilance and openness to challenge. In Spivak's formulation, transnational literacy also requires multilingualism, what she calls 'deep language learning,' and a special attentiveness to what she terms the precapitalist cultures of the world. For an academic audience based in the United States, she suggests transnational literacy can be developed through a process of mutual interruption between the multidisciplines of comparative literature and Area Studies, as practised within their nation (Spivak, 2003). Her prescriptions for other constituencies are different.

This chapter suggests there is much to learn from indigenous resurgence in the Americas. Simpson and McLeod write out of eastern and western North American indigenous understandings, respectively, interrupting, redirecting and expanding what the English language can articulate. In a related enterprise, Candice Amich analyses indigenous Chilean performance as documented in Cecilia Vicuña's formally innovative film to show how it 'refigures precarity, as the fragility of life and culture under conditions of neo-liberal globalization, into planetarity, an alternative that looks to precapitalist cultures to imagine a postcapitalist future' (2014: 135). What resonates for Amich in Spivak's theorization of planetarity is the ethical framework it provides 'for rethinking collectivity' in terms of 'receptivity and reciprocity' (2014: 148), a framework she finds exemplified in Vicuña's film. For Amich, a 'poetics of planetarity' must first 'register the sensory violence of globalization' and secondly, 'retreat from the desire to dominate time and space and embrace instead the alterity of the planet' (2014: 149). Although I appreciate her insights, I would argue that a focus on autonomy can enable a 'poetics of planetarity' to start from a different place, a recognition of the meaning-making systems that were occluded by colonialism but that survived in ceremony and memory.

## Literature and culture: Versions of autonomy

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Literature and culture are often assumed to exist within an autonomous sphere, freed from the market and the state. Some postcolonial theorists still defend this autonomy of the aesthetic, holding it to be an important value (Bongie, 2008). Culture holds a more complex position due to the interests of several disciplines in claiming culture as their terrain. Lawrence Grossberg notes that 'culture has increasingly moved from a transcendental autonomy to a form of quotidianization' but without necessarily shedding belief in

its autonomy (2010). Grossberg defines this kind of autonomy as a particular form of 'embedded disembeddedness' (2010: 147). This allows the cultural sphere to claim a separate and privileged status within an often invisible system of unquestioned assumptions about how things are, even as this order is changing. Teasing out how this definition of autonomy as 'embedded disembeddedness' connects to autonomy, understood as self-determination, is a task that postcolonial cultural community and border studies are well suited to consider.

In *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (2010), Grossberg first notes, but then sidelines this kind of attention to the conditions available for knowledge production today. He provides a list of important issues he is unable to address: 'the environment (and the materiality of the world); religion; globalizations; various structures of belongings; militarism and violence; and the changing practices of knowledge production (under specific conditions of new technological, institutional, and postcolonial developments)' (2010: 5). A long list, these are questions that postcolonial and globalization studies prioritize and they are not so easily dismissed. In this chapter, however, I take issue only with his suggestion that all these problems are somehow equivalent, and their omission can be discounted given that 'cultural studies need not seek completeness' (2010: 5). In my view, the changing practices of knowledge production are not just one domain like the others; they constitute the changing context out of which we work and the emergent challenges we face within an academic system that is increasingly becoming internationalized in some respects while remaining dangerously parochial in others. Furthermore, currently dominant paradigms of internationalization stress competition between nation-states over transnational cooperation. Yet, cooperation is needed if solutions are to be found. In other words, how we make sense of the other issues he lists depends on the changing practices of knowledge production.

Grossberg does not quite see the connection when he admits another weakness of his book is that of the particular location out of which he writes:

I know that the fact that I am trying to tell a story from inside the United States limits me in profound and sometimes disabling ways, for I can only follow the lines of transformation and struggle so far. And I know that the conversations I am calling for are already taking place in various regions of the world. I have tried to acknowledge and even enter into conversation with some of them, but I realize it remains too gestural.

(2010: 5)

This is an honest and important admission, but a more serious problem than he implies. I work with a similar sense of my own limitations and a recognition that my Canadian location, and within Canada, my prairie location, while in some ways ex-centric to the academy he addresses – which in his words is 'largely the highly professionalized, capitalized, and formalized U.S. and European university systems' (Grossberg, 2010: 5) – is still insufficiently differentiated from them so as to afford much of an alternative view. In this sense, even those supposedly at the heart of the new empire inhabit precarious spaces. What is needed now is more than what any single individual or location can provide. Scholars need the

kind of interregional, interdisciplinary, intergenerational and collaborative dialogue that carefully designed team-based research can provide. If scholars truly believed the UNESCO statement that ‘the cultural wealth of the world is its diversity in dialogue’ then how might the spaces for dialogue be opened and rearranged?

To begin to answer that question, I suggest the following. Firstly, each location is different and will provide alternative formations enabling different views (as Grossberg would no doubt acknowledge). Secondly, not just the practices, but also the enabling conditions of knowledge production, and the status of knowledge producers, are changing more quickly than Grossberg recognizes. Thirdly, the hegemony of the United States in global knowledge production is very powerful, but its attendant parochialism is also more limiting than many within that system are able to see. Fourthly, the global power of the English language is an important element in that dominance but it could lose its pre-eminence very quickly (Ostler, 2010). Fifthly, some of the global conversations that Grossberg admits are already happening are more accessible than he suggests. Although he implies that his focus on the academy rules out engagement with other knowledge producers from outside the university system, to take such a stance is to ignore the many partnership projects between civil society groups and the universities. These borders are less heavily policed than he suggests. Finally, in his conclusion, Grossberg calls for cultural studies to engage in new conversations with such alternative knowledge-producing groups. Such conversations, he argues, could be ‘trans-institutional,’ ‘trans-epistemic,’ ‘transnational and trans-regional’ and ‘trans-disciplinary’ (Grossberg, 2010: 291). I endorse such a call, even as I caution against putting too much weight on the power of that word ‘trans’. This chapter suggests some of the transformations that answering his call may entail.

Grossberg notes that ‘one cannot be interdisciplinary by oneself, and the collaboration cannot simply reproduce a disciplinary division of labour (e.g. I bring culture, you bring economics)’ (2010: 292). As long as we continue to accept the current disciplinary divisions of labour, and the implied autonomy of their concerns, we will not be able to make the connections that globalization increasingly suggests will be essential to survival. The challenge is how to make those connections and keep them productive. Current publications in defence of the humanities, attacking neo-liberalism and written out of an increased sense of the precariousness of their positioning within a changing global higher education regime, may prove counter-productive.

In contrast, Spivak’s theorizations of ‘transnational literacy’ and ‘planetarity’ offer connected ways of cutting across some of the problems associated with the ‘embedded disembeddedness’ of current disciplinary terrains and their divisions of responsibility. Each concept is based on respect for the autonomy of others; that is, for their right to make their own kinds of sense of how the world operates and to make their own choices about how to run their lives. This is where autonomy can become quite complex. It is one thing to recognize the value of the autonomy of others, as Grossberg does when he claims that ‘it is not my job – as a critical scholar – to tell people what they should be or should desire’ (2010: 97). It is another to ask how to adjudicate when competing autonomy claims clash in the politics

of knowledge production or the making of public policy, or to ask if it is possible, in theory, for someone to choose, autonomously, to restrict or abdicate his or her own autonomy. That latter question is most often asked in reference to women, children or the cognitively disabled, suggesting that original definitions of autonomy based on the male as norm still trail some of that history with them and have not been as amenable to revision as earlier feminists had hoped. These are questions taking shape around current efforts to legislate the wearing of the *niqab*. Significant work in feminist philosophy, critical race, globalization, postcolonial and multicultural studies wrestles with these challenges. The resolutions of such questions carry material consequences for how we choose to live our lives together. One of the major obstacles to resolving some of these debates is the asymmetrical ways in which culture is understood as operating within different configurations of power.

### Versions of planetarity

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In this regard it can be helpful to ask what makes the Spivakian turn to ‘planetarity’ different from theorizations of cosmopolitanism, environmentalism, worldliness or globalization. Spivak is clear she ‘cannot offer a formulaic access to planetarity. No one can’ (2003: 78). I like the openness to the unforeseen here. Spivak admits she keeps ‘feeling that there are connections to be made that I cannot make, that pluralization may allow the imagining of a necessary yet impossible planetarity in ways that neither my reader nor I know yet’ (2003: 92). We feel ourselves to be on the cusp of opening horizons, but pluralization alone will not be enough, as she recognizes. Pluralization is so often the default mode of current theorizing, it no longer functions as a viable solution in itself. When she starts to delimit planetarity by clarifying what it is not, and what she hopes it might do, the stakes become clearer. Spivak proposes planetarity as a model to replace both her idea of postcolonialism and what she sees as its investment in ‘mere nationalism,’ claiming ‘I outline this utopian idea [of planetarity] as a task for thinking ground because otherwise a “reformed” comparative literary vision may remain caught within varieties of cultural relativism, specular alterity, and cyber-benevolence’ (2003: 81). She continues: ‘[t]ransnational literacy may remain confined within a politics of recognizing multiculturalism or of international aid, in the interest of a “Development” of which the promise of cyber-literacy is increasingly a part’ (2003: 81). These are dangers to guard against as educators rush to embrace the agendas of critical digital and multi-literacies. But when she claims that ‘cultural studies is heavily invested in new immigrant groups,’ and continues: ‘it seems to me that a planetary comparative literature must attempt to move away from this base’ (2003: 84), she short-changes the necessary politics of renegotiating the social contract in multicultural nation-states and the potential of critical race studies, in dialogue with indigenous and settler colonial studies, to redefine urban, regional and national imaginaries. She dismisses both cultural and postcolonial studies too quickly in *Death of a Discipline*, equating them with a simplistic form of identity politics, which she labels as ‘neither smart nor good’ (2003: 84).

In contrast, Paul Gilroy is much more forthright about what he means by planetarity:

The planetary consciousness I am invoking was a precious result of anticolonial conflict. It is now a stimulus to the multi-cultural and a support for anti-racist solidarity. It was linked to a change of scale, a whole re-imagining of the world which had moral and political dimensions. That world became not a limitless globe, but a small, fragile, and finite place [...] It is a critical orientation and an oppositional mood.

(2005: 290)

Gilroy's adoption of the term picks up on its usefulness for forging anti-racist, postcolonial and environmental alliances but at the cost of downplaying radical alterity, which for Spivak is at the heart of the concept. I do not want to give up on the possibility of considering these two versions of 'planetarity' together. This is a project requiring more concentrated attention. Furthermore, if Spivak's planetarity is to grip locally situated imaginations in ways that can take them out of their own inherent biases, then we need to find ways to articulate its premonitions of radical alterity more closely to the histories and modalities of particular places in their specificity.

Ursula Heise (2008) dismisses Spivak's theorization of 'planetarity' as of limited value for eco-criticism due to its lack of attention to more practical issues of how to negotiate within and across currently established boundaries of difference and identity claims. Heise finds the trope of 'planetarity' lacking, because she finds it hard to see how its alternative framing of understanding can have any purchase in our contemporary world, which is structured around the nation-state system and the largely Eurocentric imaginaries that these tropes minimize. But surely this is the point. Spivak is making a utopian argument, less interested in negotiating change on the ground, at least immediately, than in working to rearrange desire through the slower work of teaching and imagining otherwise. She issues a more radical challenge to the imagination, a challenge she sees as necessary if current trends are to be altered. Yet there are dangers in this approach.

The open-endedness of Spivak's advocacy of 'planetarity' has made it vulnerable to co-optation by projects with very different orientations. Wai Chee Dimock (2006) conscripts planetarity to support her analytic shift towards 'deep time.' 'Deep time' highlights 'a set of longitudinal frames, at once projective and recessional, with input going both ways, and binding continents and millennia into many loops of relations, a densely interactive fabric' (Dimock, 2006: 3-4). This introduces an exciting and much broader perspective to literary studies, but there is a real danger that the centrality of unequal power relations gets lost within such a frame. The method becomes a modernist reading-back into history through the key preoccupations of our times: with cosmopolitanism, circulation, intertextualities, hybridities and mobilities organizing the inquiry. What remains is modernity's urge to universalize from an insufficient base and its denial of the power relations distorting its constructions.

In a related move, Susan Stanford Friedman (2010) claims her adoption of ‘planetarity’ in opposition to Spivak’s utopianism, for the very modernity that Spivak critiques. Friedman concludes her essay ‘Planetarity’ with the claim: ‘Planetarity is not a threat, it is an opportunity. It means leaving the comfort zone for the contact zone’ (2010: 494). She offers thirteen ways of looking at planetarity, and none of them involve power disparities. In contrast, Spivak’s ‘planetarity’ *is* a threat. As such, it is the kind of opportunity not everyone will welcome. Friedman and Dimock embrace ‘planetarity’ as an opportunity to expand modernist studies and American studies, respectively, along what Friedman describes as ‘three main axes – the temporal, horizontal, and vertical’ (Friedman, 2010: 473). Spivak questions the logic of expansion itself, and the versions of exchange on which it thrives.

Dimock and Friedman show how literary studies are working hard to absorb ‘planetarity’ into a continuation of the modernist project. Spivak (2011) now regrets using the word ‘planet’ given the associations it arouses with custodianship of the earth, which she believes: ‘has led to a species of feudalism without feudalism coupled with the method of “sustainability”, keeping geology safe for good imperialism, emphasizing capital’s social productivity but not its irreducible subalternizing tendency’ (2011: 101–102). She insists that her use of planetarity ‘does not refer to an applicable methodology’ (2011: 101), and explains: ‘I have given up hope that my counter-intuitive use of “planet” will fly, though many have claimed “planetarity” *a la* Spivak, even Christian theologians’ (2011: 101). What she wished to invoke she now describes as ‘a sense of the forbidding (non)place of “planetarity”’ (2011: 101), a perspective from which liberal humanism, modernist aesthetics and deconstructive theory alike look irrelevant.

Planetarity is valuable, then, for its reminder of a fundamental, grounding precariousness built into the heart of human existence, and a humbling of human pretension, but it is not meant as an excuse for disengaging from immediate issues of injustice or the task of educators to rethink our functions within a changing system. The effort to think beyond contemporary understandings of what is possible is at the heart of what learning through transnational literacy can enable. An engagement with the challenges of Spivak’s thinking can help postcolonial, cultural, community and border studies clarify what is at stake within current educational restructuring and maintain our commitment to finding the unexpected openings that Spivak associates with the un-coerced rearrangements of desire within our classrooms and transnational knowledge exchanges. For the range and power of contemporary precarity structures to be understood, more attention will need to be paid to how precarity is gendered, localized and racialized, and how it becomes articulated (made real and realizable), as well as naturalized within particular spaces. That work will need to be accompanied by creative projects that imagine alternative modes of social organization – a project this book begins to undertake.

This chapter has argued that emergent imaginaries of autonomy and planetarity result from the interplay of resurgent indigenous imaginaries and decolonizing initiatives generated from within and outside what is increasingly being seen as the cracking imaginary of ‘the cognitive box of imperialism’ (Simpson, 2011). That cognitive box creates precarity even as

it promises security. Creatives, artists, community activists and academic researchers can come together in reimagining what relational autonomy could look like in multiple forms of practice. When the imagination is understood as a social practice, then the links between cognitive and social justice can begin to be envisioned.

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## **Chapter 3**

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From the precarious to the hybrid: The case of the *Maré* Complex in  
Rio de Janeiro

Lilian Fessler Vaz and Claudia Seldin



## Introduction

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This chapter looks at socio-cultural changes in a region of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, called *Maré Complex* (*Complexo da Maré*), formed by abandoned industrial areas and expanding slums. In this region, we can observe the emergence of a new territory; an area of resistance, or a hybrid area, where housing, work and culture all mix together and the traditionally formed logic, based on industrialization and slum discourse, has been replaced by new, more complex dynamics – a result of deindustrialization and the multiple uses of urban space.

*Maré* is formally a wetland area on the Northern Zone of Rio, and is constituted of sixteen different slums. Its growth was parallel to the growth of industrial activities in the region during the 1940s and 1950s, and its population consisted mostly of informal settlements built by nearby industrial workers (Abreu, 2006). Characterized by poverty and a large number of stilt houses, this complex of slums was the target of major urban interventions in the 1980s and 1990s, amongst which we highlight the Rio Project in 1982 that included sanitation and the implementation of social housing, as well as the construction of two new road axes in the 1990s – the Red and Yellow Lines (*Linhas Vermelha e Amarela*).

These major interventions were simultaneous with the process of deindustrialization of the area beginning in the 1980s, which caused several factories to close down, leaving behind abandoned infrastructure and urban voids that pointed to the degradation of *Maré's* urban landscape. With the reduction of work opportunities and lack of appropriate public policies and social housing options in the region, these empty buildings were subsequently occupied with non-industrial activities. The new mixed occupations, which involved simultaneous cultural, residential and institutional uses, resulted in the formation of a new territory, marked by hybridism.

As part of our attempt to understand the complexity of a hybrid territory in formation, we draw on various fields of knowledge including architecture, urban planning and geography (Bonnemaison, 2002; Haesbaert, 2004; Santos, 1994, 2009); cultural studies (Barker, 2005; Coelho, 2004; Hall, 1992), anthropology and sociology (Canclini, 1997, 2008; Holston, 1996, 2008), as well as urban history (Abreu, 2006; Certeau, 1998). This interdisciplinary approach can help us better comprehend not only the spatial relationships existing in *Maré*, but also the social, cultural and power relations of this territory.

Firstly, we draw on the concept of opaque spaces, as defined by Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (1994, 2009). For Santos, opaque spaces are those connected to poverty,

irregularity and informality of settlements, as opposed to the bright spaces, marked by abundance, rationality and formality of design. From the point of view of the opaque, we contextualize the history of *Maré*, presenting the new mixed occupations researched in the area.

Further ahead, we delve into the concept of *Maré* as a unique territory within the city fabric. We draw on the writings of cultural geographer Joël Bonnemaison (2002), for whom a social group, its culture and its territory are inseparable and indispensable elements to understand the interface between space and culture. For Bonnemaison, a place is a lived space, an area to which meanings have been assigned. Following this line of argument, *Maré* territory can be envisaged as a manifestation of the production of meanings in a space.

While addressing territory, we also draw on the concept of hybridization, proposed by Argentinian anthropologist Néstor García Canclini (1997, 2008), which allows us to analyse the blend, retrofits and upgrades that occur in times of globalization, refusing fixation in isolated disciplines and concepts and focusing on the assumptions of heterogeneity. We also use the concept of micro-resistance from Certeau (1998), regarding the tactics and everyday practices used to reutilize objects and spaces and subvert the institutionally imposed references and standards as a means to create fissures in the established relations of power. It could be argued that these practices can be more than silent and subtle forms of resistance, expressed not only through cultural and artistic manifestations, but also through the spaces they are able to create. Through the means of art, culture and space production, these forms of micro-resistance may also be considered as emancipatory movements, or alternative ways to fight for the right to the city, as addressed by Lefebvre (1991).

### **Precarious spaces vs opaque spaces**

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When we discuss precarious spaces in Brazil, we automatically think of the ‘favelas,’ a term that refers to the local slums sprawled either on flat land or on the hillsides of both metropolitan centres and smaller cities across the country. The favelas usually replace former green areas with densely packed constructions, where the poorest sectors of the population live and where low-quality infrastructure prevails.

Over the last century, the favelas in Rio de Janeiro have turned into a significant share of urban reality. In order to understand their proliferation, it is necessary to emphasize the considerable framework of segregation and inequality that characterizes this city. The local disparities are combined with an absence of egalitarian public policies, a lack of social security and a general disregard to the inhabitants of peripheral areas. Furthermore, there is a clear preference for investments (public and private) in the renewal of the most visible and wealthy neighbourhoods. Consequently, the favelas are marginalized and perceived in a derogatory manner – both locally and globally. This perception is largely based on the idea of absence, focusing on what is lacking rather than on what is abundant. As a result, the general discourse surrounding the favelas

is linked to negative connotations of violence, misery, ill-health, drugs and the lack of urban infrastructure (such as water supply, electricity, sewage and waste collection). If, for the most part, these problems are indeed real, there is another side to the favelas, frequently ignored by the homogenizing discourse, which deem all favela spaces as poor urban dwellings. We argue here that it is necessary to identify the differing realities of the more than 700 favelas of Rio de Janeiro, acknowledging the diverse and rich culture they produce.

That is why we propose that favelas should be considered not necessarily as precarious, but as 'opaque.' According to the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (1994, 2009), opaque spaces are those spaces – opposed to the type of spaces considered to be luminous and modernized – that are quick to mobilize, representing an informed city. Whilst luminous spaces, where the wealthiest group of the city population live, would be marked by regularity, restriction, mechanical routines and a lack of surprise, the opaque spaces are organic, spontaneous, filled with social interactions and improvisation. These are spaces marked by proximity, creativity and openness (Santos, 2009: 261).

The opaque spaces would also be the places where the economically non-hegemonic classes inhabit, circulate and survive, 'where times are slow, adapted to the incomplete or inherited infrastructures of the past' (Santos, 1994: 39), representing 'zones of resistance,' particularly cultural resistance. These spaces would be characterized by action, 'beginning with the action of thought' (Santos, 1994: 42). It is in the opaque spaces that we see transformations that could change the homogenous dominant cultural standards of contemporary urban living, thus placing the most disadvantaged groups as actors capable of initiating new debates about the city's future. One such debate concerns cultural access, defending a better distribution of infrastructural facilities throughout the city, as well as generating more visibility and legitimacy to undervalued cultural practices, which emerge in poorer areas. In Rio de Janeiro, such debates materialized in initiatives that altered the homogenous dominant cultural standards of contemporary urban living. Such is the case of the dwellers of the *Maré* Complex. This chapter considers the favela of *Maré* from the perspective of its potential to oppose but simultaneously complement the formal city.

### **The *Maré* Complex: A brief contextualization**

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The *Maré* Complex, situated in the Northern Zone of Rio de Janeiro, is formed by sixteen favelas and adjacent spaces, accommodating around 130,000 inhabitants,<sup>1</sup> in an area of approximately 800 km<sup>2</sup>. Over the past few decades, *Maré*, as it is known, has been the backdrop for continuous conflicts between different drug trafficking groups. As a result through the media discourse, extreme violence has been associated with this area within the city. Furthermore, in the last demographic Census of 2010, it has also been identified by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) as one of the districts with

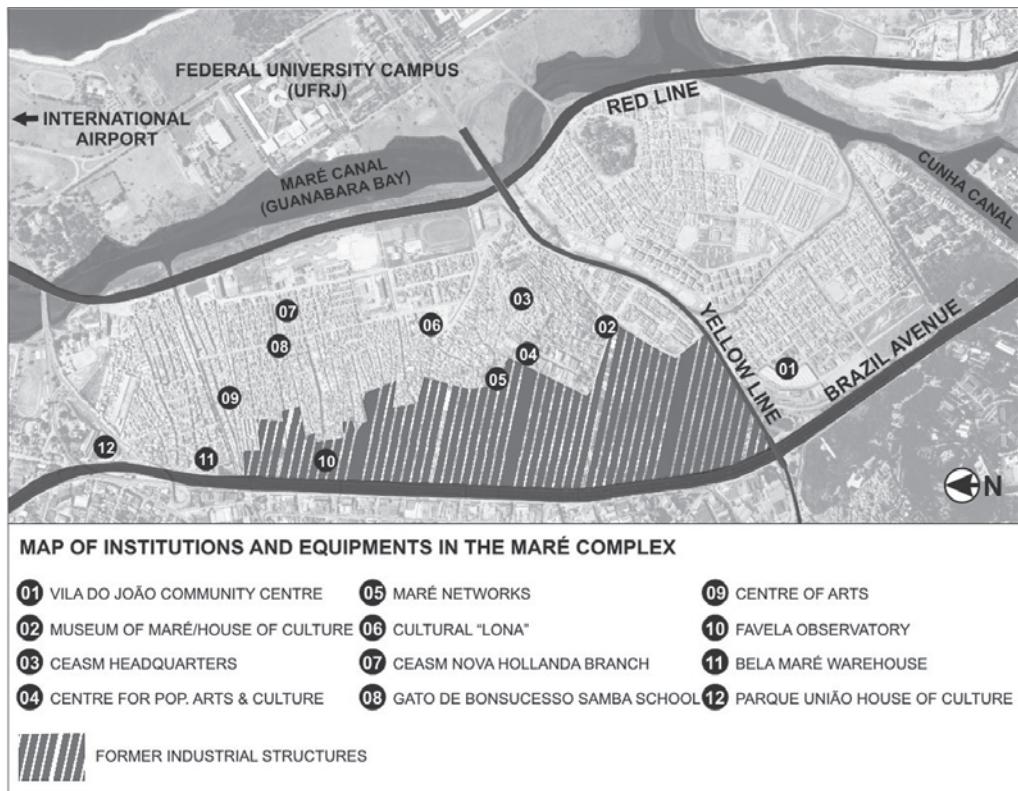


Figure 3.1: Partial schematic map of the Maré Complex, highlighting some of its known cultural spaces, 2013. Personal archive. Courtesy of Pereira Passos Institute.

the lowest Human Development Index figures and with the largest concentration of low-income residents.

Despite being recognized as an official district by the local city council since 1994, the region is still considered by many as a transit zone on the periphery of the city. This is mainly due to the fact that the area is located between two of the primary municipal highways – the Brazil Avenue and the Red Line – and is further intersected by a third highway called Yellow Line.<sup>2</sup> Alongside the highway, besides the sixteen clearly defined favela communities, there is a large area of urban fabric, characterized by abandoned industrial warehouses.

The multifaceted scene observed today – defined by a mixture of high-density abandoned areas, overcrowded and unoccupied lots, as well as residential and industrial buildings – started to form in the 1940s, when the occupation of the region intensified. Until then, Maré was associated with a bucolic landscape of beaches, mangroves and a fishing village. This intense occupation in the 1940s coincided with the growth of industrial activity in the region, and was greatly influenced by the designation of the area as an Industrial Zone in 1937, and

subsequently by the inauguration of the Brazil Avenue in 1946 – for decades the only highway in and out of the city. The spread of factories in surrounding areas attracted a large population, mainly composed of migrants from the northeast of the country. New migrant workers quickly settled in the abundant land of *Maré*, which had escaped property speculation due to the difficulty, or impossibility, of constructing on its marshland, rocky areas and slopes. Due to the mixed landscape of swamps and hills, *Maré* saw two basic types of occupation: the construction of shacks in elevated and dry regions and the construction of shacks on stilts, initially built on swampland close to the highway, and subsequently spread out over the waters of the Guanabara Bay (*Baía de Guanabara*). We could argue that the occupation of each community of the *Maré* Complex occurred in its own particular way, generating a great diversity of urban morphologies and architectural typologies (Vaz, 1994; Seldin, 2008).

Today, this morphological diversity is ever more pronounced, marked by a large number of factories, warehouses and industrial spaces, concentrated in an intermediary strip between the highway and the favelas. Many of these factories have been shut down or abandoned since the 1980s, when the industry sector began to look for more profitable locations, away from the expensive urban centres of the metropolis. Because of this intense process of deindustrialization, countless urban voids were created.<sup>3</sup>

### **Ways of occupying the *Maré* Complex**

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Unlike the urban voids located around the historic centre of the city, *Maré*'s outlying industrial voids have not become the target of public policies, nor of private interventions aimed at urban renewal. In the case of *Maré*, as time went by, the former industrial sites began to be occupied once again not for industrial uses this time but by people in search of alternative housing options, local cultural groups and informal service suppliers.

In reference to housing occupations, we have observed a new, different kind of 'intramural favela,' no longer clearly visible on the local landscape. Its growth takes place inside the warehouses and courtyards, hidden by the high factory walls. This residential occupation is often accompanied by the leasing of internal spaces for the development of informal services, car-parking being one of the most common. When not accompanied by services, the residential use is usually followed by a simultaneous cultural use.

### **The *Maré* Centre for Popular Arts and Culture**

A pre-eminent example of mixed residential and cultural occupation refers to the squats growing inside the walls of the former Quartzolit factory, a paint and building material manufacturer, once based in the Timbau Hill favela (*Morro do Timbau*). This particular lot, at one point known as the *Maré* Centre for Popular Arts and Culture (*Centro de Artes e Cultura Popular da Maré*), and more recently as the Portelinha Occupation (*Ocupação Portelinha*),

is constituted by a five-storey administration building and equipped with spacious rooms, two vast warehouses and private courtyards. In this case, as with others in *Maré*, there is a territorial dispute over property rights, which involves a diverse range of interests, such as those of dwellers, artists, drug dealers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

With the closing of the Quartzolit factory in the early 1990s, its legal owners experienced great difficulties in selling the property, mainly due to a lack of interest by other corporations in acquiring a large building located in an area known for its growing violence, as reported by local and national media throughout the 1990s:

Residents of the Maré complex, a set of slums in the Northern zone of Rio, clashed with the police on the afternoon of Wednesday, during a protest against the construction of a military police battalion station in the region. [...] In the afternoon, the mood in the complex resembled war. Residents of New Holland (Nova Holland), one of the slums in the Maré Complex, occupied lanes of the Brazil Avenue and Red Line in order to protest the construction of the military battalion station. They argue that the battalion will occupy an area of the city that was destined to host the second part of the Olympic Village within the complex. [...] Mário Domingues, president of the Olympic Village of Maré, said that residents would rather have the new battalion built between New Holland and the neighbouring slum of Timbau. [Drug] trafficking in the two communities, separated only by a street, is dominated by rival factions: in New Holland, by the 'Red Command'; in Timbau, by the 'Third Command'.

'We, of New Holland, cannot use the pool and the court of the Olympic Village, because it is located in the area of Timbau. They will not let us in. That is why we asked for a battalion, but it cannot be built here, nor can it be built in the area reserved for the leisure of the community. If this happens, besides kids getting no activity, we will be trapped,' said an annoyed resident identified only as Tereza Cristina.

(Folha de São Paulo, 2001)

The closed building of the former factory in Timbau remained under the watch of private security until 2004, when the site became the target of 'invasions' by people looking to sell remaining industrial material left inside, as well as by families looking for settlement. These invasions culminated in a massive depredation of the building and its structure. After 2005, the residents' association of the Timbau Hill favela attempted to avoid a larger illegal occupation of the site by contacting the building's owners and the local authorities with a proposal for cleaning up the courtyards, in order to convert them into sports courts, initiating a period of coordination and negotiation between different agents. Amongst the parties involved were the squatters, residents of other parts of the *Maré* Complex, leaders of NGOs and cultural organizations that had an interest in occupying the site, the residents association of Timbau, the building's owners, members of public organizations (such as the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro – UFRJ) and even the representatives of drug trafficking gangs. Once the clean-up of the courtyard was completed, the proceeds of the sale of rubble

and scrap metal were reverted to the participants. This collective action of tiding up the site encouraged further occupation of the building, as some of the people involved felt entitled to use the spaces they had helped to restore.

It is important to highlight that by 2005, the owners of the building had accumulated large fiscal debts due to evading property taxes. Because of this, they wished to donate the lot to the new occupiers in hopes of a pardon. The city council allowed the transaction; however, the amount of the owner's debts was considered higher than the real estate value, which meant that a full pardon could not be granted. The city council's unwillingness to pardon the amount outstanding, combined with the slow pace of the local government's administration and bureaucracy has resulted in problems with the transfer of property, which to this day remains unresolved.

In the subsequent years, the confusion surrounding the ownership of the lot, along with a lack of resources from the initial occupying groups, led to further invasions. Soon, a new residential occupation took hold of the internal courtyards and one of the warehouses. The squatters were mainly former *Maré* residents, evicted from nearby favelas. Their settlement triggered the aforementioned process of 'intramural favelalization,' hidden by the factory walls, and invisible to the outside.



**Figure 3.3:** View from the terrace of the *Maré* Centre for Popular Arts and Culture to one of the internal courtyards, 2007. Personal archive. Photograph by Lilian Fessler Vaz.

In 2006, a cultural group entitled Capoeira Angola Ypiranga de Pastinha (GCAYP) occupied the ground floor of the administration building with the intention of securing the space, preventing later invasions. This artistic collective focused on the practice of *capoeira*, teaching its history and emphasizing its roots with the purpose of raising cultural and social awareness. *Capoeira* is a practice that mixes sports, martial arts, music and dance, and was brought to Brazil by Bantu slaves from Africa (Vaz and Seldin, 2007). Requiring great flexibility, speed and muscular effort, the *capoeira* player can attack or defend himself against the opponent within a circle composed of other participants, who sing songs to the sound of specific musical instruments particular to the *capoeira* practice, such as the *berimbau*. *Capoeira* mixes sports and artistic elements, but also requires the player to have attitudes and take initiatives based on reasoning, intuition and improvisation as responses to the misleading movements of the opponent. This art form is seen by many as a means to prepare for life, to cope with everyday situations and with struggle. The type of *capoeira* practiced by the GCAYP is known as *Capoeira Angola* and follows the school of Master Pastinha, a defender of slave traditions and of the original philosophy behind this art form. Inside the old Quartzolit factory building, the GCAYP group also offered African dance classes and provided extra school tutoring in partnership with four municipal public schools in *Maré*. In doing so, the organization crossed the boundaries of mere cultural practice, transforming the space into an alternative social facility with a 'bottom-up' discourse, responding to real local needs.

After the GCAYP's successful installation in the building, other musical, martial arts and educational collectives showed an interest in the former factory's large empty rooms. These smaller groups, who also suffered with the scarcity of spaces for the development of their own activities, sought to form a partnership with the GCAYP, bringing about the creation of an alternative cultural facility under the name of *Maré* Centre for Popular Arts and Culture.<sup>4</sup>

The creation of the *Maré* Centre for Popular Arts and Culture can be perceived as a direct result of the lack of accessible formal cultural facilities in Rio de Janeiro, as well as of the unequal distribution of cultural experience in the city. History proves that the dwellers of marginalized areas are able to overcome certain obstacles because they possess the necessary endurance and creativity to 'invent' solutions to experienced problems. In this case, the solution was the creation of a new, alternative cultural space. The former factory, once marked by mechanical activities, line production, control and regularity was substituted by improvisation, artistic practices, dialogue and spontaneity. We highlight that the *Maré* Centre for Popular Arts and Culture, which remained open for over six years, is only one of the several alternative cultural spaces that emerged and continue to emerge in old industrial warehouses in the *Maré* Complex, denoting the stark contrast between the process of deindustrialization and the proliferation of cultural activities in the region.

After 2010, the residential squatters of the former Quartzolit factory began to organize more systematically, holding meetings in partnership with local NGOs and academic institutions in order to become better informed on the issues of ownership of the property

and understand their legal rights. As the housing occupation of this site gained strength, many of the cultural projects located inside the building opted to move to other parts of the *Maré* Complex and of the city.<sup>5</sup> Nowadays the site is better known as the Portelinha Occupation, a name that refers to the story of a Brazilian soap opera of 2007 entitled *Duas Caras*. The residential occupation of Portelinha still holds an uncertain future due to the lack of clarification of the legal issues surrounding the land.

### The Museum of *Maré*

Despite the transitory character of the cultural occupations in *Maré*, the complex is still home to one of the city's most important cultural facilities located in a favela and officially recognized by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture:<sup>6</sup> the Museum of *Maré*. Also situated in the Timbau Hill, the museum was developed by one of the most significant local associative movements, the *Maré* Centre for Studies and Solidarity Actions (CEASM), a non-profit civil association conceived in 1997 by a group of local and former residents with the aim of widening the local residents' access to culture. Inaugurated in 2006,



Figure 3.4: Facade of the Museum of *Maré*, 2007. Personal archive. Photograph by Claudia Seldin.



**Figure 3.5:** Reproduction of the Stilt House at the Museum of *Maré*, outside, 2007. Personal archive. Photograph by Lilian Fessler Vaz.



**Figure 3.6:** Reproduction of the Stilt House at the Museum of *Maré*, inside, 2007. Personal archive. Photograph by Lilian Fessler Vaz.

the museum is part of an 800 m<sup>2</sup> site where, until the beginning of the 1990s, was a boat repair yard.

The Museum's archive is composed almost entirely of objects donated by residents of *Maré*. The museum focuses the exhibition around the history of the community from a local point of view. The permanent exhibition, named *Times of Maré*, is divided into twelve installations, each focused on one important aspect of life in *Maré*, such as: *Times of Immigration*, *Times of Water*, *Times of the Home*, *Times of the Everyday*, *Times of Resistance*, *Times of the Festivity*, *Times of Street Markets*, *Times of Faith*, *Times of Children*, *Times of Fear*, *Times of the Future*. This way, the curators highlighted the importance of immigrants from the northeast of Brazil coming to Rio de Janeiro in order to build the favelas in *Maré*, their struggles to build the stilt houses on the water terrain and the cultural and religious practices of different settler groups. The central element of the museum is the installation called *Times of the Home*, represented by a tall stilt house that reproduces the typical dwelling of the region. The stilt house has a small veranda, and is an independent structure, supported by wooden stakes, inside the warehouse. Internally, the house has only one room furnished and decorated with various objects donated by the community.

The museum's emphasis is placed as much on the physical aspects of the area as on the identities that make up the region. The replica house embodies the meanings and symbols that exist therein, and also denotes the act of dwelling as a right. The centrality of the stilt house within the museum makes clear the importance given by the community to the urban components of *Maré*, particularly the act of dwelling – the house as a symbol for one of the most significant material forms of preserving local history. The replica house evokes memories and fragments of the lives of its residents. The central position given to the house serves as a form of community self-affirmation: despite the eradication of the old favela and its precarious living conditions, the stilt house represents memories of its inhabitants. We here witness a reversal of meanings, a redefinition; the despised symbol of national misery is transformed into a symbol of cultural resistance.

According to Chagas and Abreu (2007), the Museum of *Maré* distinguishes itself from other museums because the principal interest is not the act of preservation, but the social life of the residents. The museum appears different from the other cultural centres that have spread throughout the city because its set-up is not the product of a generic policy. The differentiating element of the Museum of *Maré* is its intention to put residents in touch with their own origins, raising awareness about their history and suggesting that the memory of the favela can be found through the stories of those that lived and still live there. We add that the Museum of *Maré* is also different because it is not the product of a generic urban renewal project nor is it devoid of content to offer a spectacular experience for the public. The very existence of the museum denotes a resistance to the concentration of cultural facilities in the urban centres. It affirms the favela as a place of culture and memory, recognizing the differences among its many communities and positioning the favela as a diverse and heterogeneous space.

## The Favela Observatory

Another example of an occupation of a former industrial warehouse in *Maré*, this time for educational and research purposes, refers to the Favela Observatory (Observatório de Favelas), an institution that was also initially linked to the CEASM group. The project for the observatory was created in 2000, as one of the actions that made up the CEASM association. It was set up under the label of Social Observatory Network, with the purpose to assist in the research for the first internal demographic Census of *Maré* Complex in 2000. The *Maré* 2000 Census was developed by the local dwellers as a way to overcome the scarcity of information related to the complex and allow the inhabitants of *Maré* to have a better knowledge over their own reality. Once completed, the funds for this network were cut and CEASM was forced to terminate the program. The team responsible for the census transformed it into a new initiative, changing their name to Favelas Observatory.

In subsequent years, the program began to develop its own projects responding to the specific demands revealed by the 2000 Census. The Favela Observatory became an independent institution in 2003, with its own identity and clear political principles – fruits of reflections of their creators, geographers Jorge Luiz Barbosa and Jailson de Souza e Silva, professors at the Fluminense Federal University and also dwellers of *Maré*. Their main goals were:

training of grassroots leaders with technical profiles and political engagement; the organization, production, analysis and dissemination of popular interpretations of spaces, urban violence and human rights; and the provision of assistance to local community groups, in the field of diagnosis and social communication.

(Silva and Barbosa, 2005: 227)

Until 2005, the observatory functioned in the House of Culture of *Maré*, on the same site where the Museum of *Maré* is located today. However, with the establishment of these new premises, it was thought necessary to establish headquarters at a new place, where the work would not be limited to the *Maré* Complex, thus including other favelas of Rio de Janeiro.

For the past decade, the Favela Observatory has been located inside a former industrial warehouse, situated in close proximity to Brazil Avenue. As in previous cases, the occupied land was abandoned for years. It is, therefore, a similar process of occupation in an area also affected by deindustrialization. The most interesting point regarding this occupation relates to its location. While both the Portelinha Occupation and the Museum of *Maré* are situated on the Timbau Hill, the Favela Observatory is situated on the Teixeira Ribeiro Street, the main access to the favela known as New Holland (*Nova Hollanda*). This particular street delimits the area segregated by different drug trafficking gangs, therefore being constantly portrayed by the media as one of the most dangerous and violent places in the city. That is why the installation of the group in this particular site acquires a symbolic character, as one of its objectives is to promote the integration of different slums, opening bridges of dialogue between their communities.

More recently, the Favela Observatory gained attention in the midst of the wave of protests taking place in Rio de Janeiro and in many cities across Brazil in 2013. The government's decision to raise the fares of public transportation in eleven state capitals of Brazil led to large protests in many metropolitan centres such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. These protests were met with violence from the local military police forces, leading to perplexity and massive discontent of both lower and middle classes. On 20 June, 2013, over 1 million people took to the streets in several cities of the country (Folha de São Paulo, 2013), an event that led to other demonstrations in the months following. While initially setting out to protest against the raise in transportation fares, the demonstrations began to incorporate different demands, reflecting the level of dissatisfaction of the Brazilian population regarding its national politics. Aside from the lack of proper urban transportation, claims were made on the subjects of political corruption, urban violence and police brutality, poor urban infrastructure, access to health care, excessive public funds spent on mega events (such as the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games) as well as deficiency in advancing human rights-driven policies.

On 24 June, 2013, after a demonstration on Brazil Avenue, a police operation was conducted in the *Maré* Complex, in the favela of New Holland, leading to the death of thirteen people. While the police claimed they were in search for criminals carrying out mass robberies throughout the demonstration, the Favela Observatory had a key role in speaking up for the residents and denouncing serious human rights violations that took place at that time, leading to the killing of innocent people in *Maré*:

Since last night the New Holland favela, Maré, is occupied by agents of [the elite squad] BOPE, the Shock Troops and the National Guard. The action supposedly took place in response to a mass robbery in [the neighbourhood of] Bonsucesso moments before. During the raid, at about 19:00, tear gas bombs were thrown at the residents, one of which reached the outer courtyard of the headquarters of the Observatory, startling the people who were in the institution. This was followed by intense gunfire, which lasted through the night, when the power was cut off from the community.

This morning, the favela was still occupied, still without power, its commerce closed and the presence of the police was visible. According to reports from residents, the operation, which has so far resulted in thirteen deaths, also had a large number of human rights violations, such as home invasions followed by vandalism, looting and intimidation of residents by police. [...]

In addition to the raids and depredations, residents denounced the illegal confiscation of money and documents.

(Observatório de Favelas, 2013)

The killings in *Maré* soon led to further demonstrations. The Favelas Observatory has become another example of an occupation that surpasses its initial purposes to play a bigger role within the local socio-political reality of city regeneration and development.

The examples presented in this chapter are all recent initiatives aimed at altering the negative perception of *Maré*; a move from a discourse tied to ‘an immense group of favelas’ to a new ‘hub’ for cultural and social development in the city. Several other collectives, organizations and civic initiatives can be found in the many favelas that make up the complex.<sup>7</sup> These micro-organizations constitute a range of mobile activities, very often interconnected. It is not uncommon to see resident associations using the facilities of religious organizations, and cultural groups using public spaces or associations’ offices for their temporary activities and workshops. What can be observed is a consolidation of partnerships, which revolve around the spaces and morph to function under the logic of networks.

In short, the examples presented in this chapter lead us to believe that the *Maré* Complex is more than a collection of favelas in the peripheral area of Rio de Janeiro. Owing to the complexity of the region, we suggest that the *Maré* Complex is better conceptualized as a complex territory characterized by cultural and social multiplicity.

### ***Maré: A hybrid territory***

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In order to understand the idea of a complex of favelas as one single territory, we briefly discuss the notion of territoriality. Drawing on the writings of social and cultural geographers Joël Bonnemaison (2002) and Rogério Haesbaert (2004), we consider that a territory is a region of complexity, marked by diverse identities, uncertainty and power struggles. Haesbaert (2004) presents the territory as a system composed of distinct spheres, referencing, in particular, the political, economic, natural and cultural spheres. The cultural sphere is of most interest to us here, as it implies the vision of space derived from the symbolic appropriations of a group. Other writers have adopted the analysis of the cultural dimension of territory and place. Within the field of cultural studies, Brazilian author Teixeira Coelho (2004) defines territory as the construction of identities and day-to-day relationships of individuals in their place of origin, similarly highlighting the cultural domain. The socio-cultural dimension of territory is also defended by the social scientist Chris Barker (2005), who points out that territories are socially constructed locations, wherein the production of meaning for the space occurs. And, finally, Bonnemaison (2002) presents territories formed as results of the relationship between culture and space, emphasizing the inseparable and complementary link between a social group, its culture and its territory. Bonnemaison also associates the concept of territory to the concept of networks, conceptualizing it through a hierarchy of places connected through the practices of certain social groups.

We note that contemporary discussions about territory bear upon its permanency, questioning transformations that result from the intensification of globalization, and the allied compression of notions of space and time, to the shortening of distances and the weakening of borders. Regarding the paradigm of de-territorialization, Haesbaert (2004) asserts that we live in a moment of transition from a more palpable and material reality to one of constant mobility that is increasingly symbolic and subjective:

Under the impact of globalization, processes that have ‘compressed’ space and time, eradicating the distances through instant communication and promoting the influence of faraway places on one another, the weakening of all types of border and the dominant crisis of territoriality of the State-nation, our actions being governed more by the images and representations that we create than by the material reality that involves us, our lives immersed in a constant mobility, concrete and symbolic, what is left of our ‘territories’, of our ‘geography’?

(Haesbaert, 2004: 19–20)

The traditional territories to which we are accustomed – fixed, stable, continuous, contiguous and homogenous – guided by a defined and exclusive spatial logic (which rarely permits overlapping due to its exact limitations and well-marked boundaries) have begun to give way to a new configuration. This new configuration appears to be more fluid, dynamic and mobile – simultaneously divisible and connectible. The new territories possess properties that are increasingly immaterial, intangible and heterogeneous, resembling networks. In this sense, the current concept of territoriality should mix multiple spatial appropriations, from the fixed to the fluid. Haesbaert claims that we are not exactly experiencing a moment of de-territorialization nor the end of the territories as a concept; instead, we are undergoing a phenomenon of multi-territorialization, or rather that we are currently living the simultaneous experience of various territories. Unavoidably, we are also living through consequent processes of re-territorialization, meaning that we can observe a constant redefinition of territories through the transformation of their uses, and the relationships and social agents present in them.

Based upon Coelho’s, Barker’s, Bonnemaison’s and Haesbaert’s works, as well as upon our observation of the *Maré* case study, we have come to understand territories as hubs, where groups meet and where their culture is condensed into symbolic form: materially through their architectures, or immaterially through the practices performed in them, and the meanings that remain embedded within the places (Vaz, 2010). In view of the different forms of occupation and connections presented in the *Maré* Complex, we believe that this area of Rio de Janeiro corresponds to the description of multi-territorialization proposed by Haesbaert. In *Maré*, we can observe multiple micro-territories within one larger territory, where different social actors co-exist and appropriate space. More than that, the discussed examples point at the web of interaction that identifies various initiatives inside and outside of *Maré* as networks of collaboration. For instance, the *Maré* Museum has worked closely with state universities located in other neighbourhoods and the *capoeira* group from the Timbau Hill performs frequently on the streets and squares of the downtown area. The networks formed between these groups and the territories that they facilitate to morph are not fixed, expanding the limits of the favela complex, decentralizing action in order to take the symbolic territory of *Maré* to the rest of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

In this sense, the established connections can be considered as ‘seams’ between an area of residential slums and a previously industrial zone, as well as between this ‘zone’ and the rest of the city. We speak here of ‘seams’ because, in a way, our examples function as a means

for symbolically sewing back together places that were never linked or no longer connected. It is important to point out that, because these examples refer to the fringes of the favelas (being located at their edges) and because they maintain strong ties with each other, they end up transposing boundaries and merging different territories. Inside *Maré*, the ‘seams’ suggest the reinforcement of a local dialogue, outside *Maré* they suggest an approximation between the informal city and the formal city.

The projects, networks and relationships created by the aforementioned groups have contributed to transforming the existing dynamics of *Maré* by creating new local experiences and also by taking these experiences to other parts of the city. The continuous construction of the *Maré* territory is, therefore, a process of exchange, in which space is used in different and multiple ways, serving the purpose of uniting and not of fragmenting, as was once typical of early modernity, when every activity had its own place in the sectored city. Within the post-modern context, dwelling, working, leisure and circulation are activities not necessarily set apart, as suggested by modernist theory, but can co-exist within a single, space. They are ever-changing and hybrid.

Argentinean social scientist Néstor García Canclini (1997, 2008) claims that in Latin America there is a long history of constructing hybrid cultures, often seen through the plurality that merges hegemonic and subaltern relations – traditional and modern, cult, popular and mass. The practice of *capoeira* itself constitutes a good example of hybridization; until the mid-twentieth century, the *capoeira* players were persecuted because *capoeira* was seen as a threat, having been considered a criminal act. Having moved from the rural areas to the streets in the twentieth century, it gathered a strong urban character and eventually became an important expression of Brazilian culture. Today, *capoeira* is practiced freely and has spread to several countries, experiencing adaptations and transformation.

According to Canclini, hybridization is a set of ‘socio-cultural processes in which discreet structures and practices, that exist in a separate form are combined to generate new structures, objects and practices’ (2008: 19). The author also recognizes the impossibility of establishing totalities in the contemporary city, claiming that there is a tendency towards fragmentation and decentralization in social mobilization, as well as in the structure of the city. He believes that today’s urban life transgresses the rational order imposed by modernist thought, which tried to distribute objects and signs in specific locations and to classify them via a systematic organization of the social spaces in which they should be consumed.

The idea of analysing contemporary spaces through the concept of hybridity with a focus on social-cultural relationships is also mentioned by Stuart Hall, who treats the concept of hybridism from the perspective of the cultural sphere, claiming that: ‘the hybrid cultures constitute one of the various types of new distinct identities produced in the late modern era’ (1992: 89). For Hall, to live in hybrid cultures implies the need to practice translation, or rather, learn to co-exist with different logics simultaneously, to inhabit, speak and cope with multiple identities and various cultural languages. We argue that this is precisely what happens in the *Maré* Complex today, where different urban morphologies, groups and actions are mixed together in order to form a diverse and dynamic territory.

## Final comments on territory and resistance

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What can be observed in the case of the *Maré* Centre for Popular Arts and Culture is the emergence of a new typology within the urban landscape, characterized by shacks built within the old factory walls. We also observe attempts at cooperation between different agents working towards a common goal of retaining a building that was once abandoned, ensuring its positive contribution to the life of the local community.

The Museum of *Maré* validates the marginalized favela culture through the recuperation of its roots, memory and history. It proves that the local community is able to create a successful facility that serves as a local landmark despite the very little attention and funding from the governmental agencies. The Museum of *Maré* represents how the favela community can reaffirm itself as a valid part of the city, endowed with rich culture in this part of Rio de Janeiro's urban history.

The Favela Observatory, with its focus on education and research, has an important role in making the *Maré*'s voice heard. By providing accurate data and statistical backing, the Observatory contributes to the production of research that informs city policy development with regard to the improvement of the quality of life across the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. In the context of protests across Brazil in 2013 and 2014, this institution attracted international and national attention to the violation of human rights in *Maré* and beyond, paving the way for protests against police brutality in the peripheral areas of Rio de Janeiro and other locations.

The examples presented in this chapter, where cultural actions merge with educational projects and alternative housing, all contributed new facilities in areas that are usually perceived as being deprived of basic services. The new organizational forms represent the marginalized population's struggle to be heard and considered as a significant part of the city development. According to Lefebvre (1985), the city is a product of social construction and relations that should be perceived within their material and symbolic dimensions that are both past and present. In this sense, it is necessary to acknowledge that the spaces that evolve in response to cultural and artistic actions as well as from alternative appropriations represent another reality to the formal city. This idea leads us to draw on Lefebvre's *The Right to the City* (1991) and his argument that all citizens should, in theory, be allowed equal access to collective goods and services, but are, in practice, denied this access due to urban segregation. For Lefebvre, the right to the city is a right to urban living, to human conditions and to a renewed democracy. In opaque areas, such as *Maré*, this right has been frequently denied and continues to be fought for, often through insurgent manners, which challenge the dynamics imposed by globalization, while presenting alternative urban solutions of temporary occupation that do not necessarily follow the patterns of the traditional urban planning.

The right to the city, in this case, is achieved through the instances of micro-resistance, contributing to reconfiguration of territory of resistance in *Maré*. In order to speak of resistance, we draw on Certeau (1998), who advocates the understanding of spaces from the perspective of the small daily activities and the social practices of those who inhabit them. Certeau considers these practices as 'the art of doing' – typically dispersed and

not particularly evident, although revealing in terms of their progressive ways of re-appropriating the territory. The *Maré* cultural occupations are manifestations of micro-resistance to the hegemonic forces prevailing in the Rio's city council. We connect the concept of micro-resistances and territory of resistance observed in *Maré*, with the concept of insurgent citizenship, suggested by Holston (2008), who carried out extensive research about the Brazilian peripheries. According to Holston, spaces of insurgent citizenship are built environments where social affirmation exists, resulting from an 'action against'. In the case of *Maré*, the 'action against' can be perceived as the action against urban invisibility, and its success comes with the ability to overcome the negligence of the state policies through the creation of the community's own means to survive. In this region, what stands out is not only the territorial multiplicity and hybridization of the different categories (activities, artistic practices and architecture), but, principally, the endurance of the local population in escaping the logic of formal planning. It is the results of these practices that give meaning to these spaces and change the existing urban dynamics, allowing for new sociability and relationships to emerge, integrating the precarious to the formal city.

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## Notes

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- 1 According to the official data provided by the Census from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) 2010. In reality, this number is likely to be larger.
- 2 *Avenida Brasil* – Brazil Avenue; *Linha Vermelha* – Red Line; *Linha Amarela* – Yellow Line.
- 3 The proliferation of urban voids in Rio de Janeiro is not limited to this region, and can be observed in various other parts of the city. Since the 1990s, many of these spaces – especially around the historic centre – have become targets for projects and public and private urban regeneration initiatives. This is because they are believed to be endowed with the potential to positively affirm the image of the city, with potential for economic growth, attracting tourism, investment and profitable businesses. A recent example of these projects

is the urban operation ‘Marvelous Port’ (*Porto Maravilha*), aimed at creating facilities and infrastructure for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro’s formerly degraded port area.

- 4 Inside the former factory building, the following organizations were located: the *capoeira* group; a martial arts gym; a recording studio attending around fifteen local bands; the NGO Latin American University Association (AULA); and an institute called Staumbor – a musical project responsible for the local orchestra *Maréimbau*. The top floor of the building was reserved for community activities; however, it remained covered with debris and was left unutilized.
- 5 Today, the founder of the *capoeira* group, Master Manoel, travels around the world conducting workshops; the Staumbor Institute operates in the Timbau Hill residents’ association building, as well as in the *Providência* favela in the centre of Rio, in the Cabritos as well as Tabajaras Hill in the neighbourhood of Copacabana.
- 6 The Museum of *Maré* was, at one point, considered by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture as the first museum located in a favela in Brazil.
- 7 Examples of such initiatives include the *Maré Redes* (*Maré Networks*) collective, the Gato de Bonsucesso samba school, the Favelas Observatory, the *Bela Maré* Warehouse and the Parque União House of Culture, just to mention a few.



Dear Dean,

It's late for me, and the city is startlingly quiet tonight. There are stacks of clothing lying on the couch in my bedroom mixed in with books and receipts. Little piles of things have gathered around the house the past few weeks – they are waiting to be sorted and stowed away – tomorrow perhaps – but for now since I am on the subject of piles, I will tell you that you can't dig anywhere in New Orleans without finding a claw full of oyster shells. Within the soupy, spongy Orleanian earth are bits of these once pearlescent and muscular creatures. My grandmother told me that when she was pregnant with my mother, she had an intense urgency to eat several dozen oysters. Her desire was so feverish that she bought two buckets of them and sat down on a stoop, shucked and sucked them down, and flung the empty shells back into the aluminium can. As she ate them, she said a lunar eclipse was happening and she could not feel more alive. My mother was born the next day, and even still when my mom gets angry or a little flustered, you can see the birth mark (or 'lunar' as they call it in Spanish) spread over her forehead like some strange continent.

I am also quite fond of oysters and so wrongly thought that they were nothing more than the mucous membranes of the sea. Since I am mostly vegetarian, I thought at long last I can eat these slimy, ocean mushrooms, guilt-free. After a bit of research though, I found out that they are very much alive, even up until the moment you separate them from their shell and gulp them down. Needless to say, I was not very pleased by this news. However, some good has come from the consumption and disposal of fish carcasses safely deposited into the city soil. Mel Chin (celebrity artist and activist) worked with a team of scientists to develop a project in New Orleans called 'operation pay-dirt.' Together they found that if the contaminated, lead infested soil is mixed with the phosphate found in fish particles and shells, the soil then becomes neutralized and safe for kids to play in.

Dear Cristina,

It is interesting that you describe the benefits of the shells for the soil. You mentioned that artist Mel Chin worked with scientists to show how fish carcasses actually neutralized the soil and made it safe for kids to play in. This mending effect of nature enables children to experiment and explore. It seems that we need both physical structures and the natural world in this mending process.

Dear Dean,

It's true that the natural world is needed in the mending process, but we know that nature is not always benign; in the case of disaster it can create a threatening catalyst of events. Yesterday, I drove with a friend down I-10 headed East, and pulled over at the side of the road to a pile of rubble that obscured several hundred feet of road behind it. A yellow-spray-painted plume blocked our path, and we quickly hopped over it to explore.

One of my fellow artists has been fascinated by a series of abandoned exit ramps that at one point would have led commuters to their suburban homes in New Orleans East.

Once projected to be a middle-class utopia, a population of white flighters rushed the area anxious to start their cosy life style. Because the area did not develop at the pace they were expecting, many of them left, as a community of middle-class African Americans planted roots there.

After Katrina, a huge debate ensued, should the city's officials just let the swamp take over this now blighted land, should it return to its natural order? Although not so direct, or politically correct, the answer was clearly: yes. Now these exit ramps are over run with cat's claw, decomposing snakes are being devoured by fire ants, swamp insects dart straight into one's eyes as one traverses the once perfectly paved road – perhaps as a warning or a projection that says, 'I don't want you here, you don't belong.'

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## Notes on contributors

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Using an arts-based inquiry, *Precarious Spaces* addresses current concerns around the instrumentality and agency of art in the context of the precarity of daily living, urban informality, and the proliferation of alternative forms of organizing. The book offers a survey of socially and community-engaged art practices in South America, focusing in particular on Brazil's 'informal' situation, and contributes much to the ongoing debate on the possibility of change through social, environmental, and ecological solutions. The individual chapters present a wide spectrum of contemporary social agency models, with an emphasis on detailed case studies and local histories. Featuring critical reflections on the spaces of urban voids, derelict buildings, self-built communities such as favela and roadside occupations, *Precarious Spaces* will make readers question their assumptions about the imaginary of precarity and life in precarious realms.

*Precarious Spaces* is a book, as much as it is a living theoretical framework offering essential lessons about the emerging art of precariousness. Focusing primarily on the Global South, which as we know is not always in the South, *Precarious Spaces* maps-out a process of 'inverse colonialism' whereby those who dwell along the borders of a collapsing society strategically rag-pick and recycle its leftovers in order to assemble a survivable world from whatever is at hand. As precarity itself migrates from the perimeter into the general conditions of contemporary life, *Precarious Spaces* proves one thing above all else: resistance is not futile.

**Gregory Sholette**, author of *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*

The common thread that stands out in this edited collection is the proliferation of precarious spaces, heterogeneous but not marginal, which are relevant to understanding of the mechanisms of the resistance to the global capital. Drawing on writings of several theorists, such as Spivak, Mignolo, Negri, Butler, Santos or Garcia Canclini to name but few, articulated together with the voice of the volume's contributors, individual chapters help us to think in the multiple ways of dimensions of precarity and dynamics of resistance.

**Dr Pablo Miguez**, Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento and Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Tecnológicas, Buenos Aires

This book presents an important and timely documentation of political and community-based art practices, focusing on Latin America, where in the past few decades the most inspiring social and political experiments have taken place. In times when austerity and precarity also touch those states and regions considered as 'rich', self-organization becomes a tool of survival all across the world.

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